

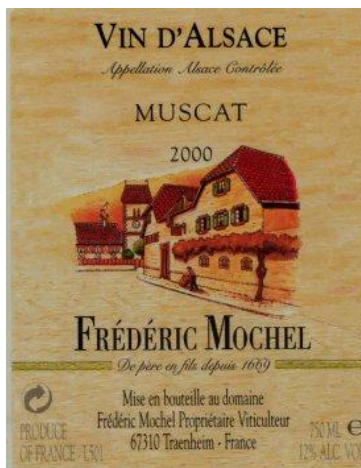
FRÉDÉRIC MOCHEL

Traenheim

Robert Parker is only the most illustrious of many whose baptism into wine (as well as things French) came by way of Alsace. I count myself among them, having been hooked by the taste of young Riesling from the great 1971 vintage. My first published wine article (for the late and largely unlamented *Friends of Wine* magazine) treated Alsace. And I was in the midst of a fifteen year run of retailing when that same Mr. Parker wrote in his by then famous journal “one shop ... has this country’s greatest selection of Alsace wines. The force behind this remarkable array is David Schildknecht.”

So why has it taken so long for Vintner Select to import any of the great wines of Alsace? The short answer is that my list of outstanding growers has changed little in the past two decades (save for the addition of Domaine Albert Mann) and these estates are all well-represented by national importers. I try to spend at least one day a year in this beautiful corner of France, picking some one old friend to visit but otherwise checking out whatever growers rumor or the European journals have most recently touted. If Vintner Select were to import wine of Alsace, it would have to be able to stand comparison with the very best, and be more reasonably priced than most. This has been slow work, but I can at last report success.

I was tipped off to Mochel by the French press. True, he was effusively praised in Tom Stevenson’s *The Wines of Alsace*, published a decade ago. But there are just so many growers in that huge compendium – so many in Alsace, period! – that Mochel’s mention somehow never tweaked my sensors. Nearly all of their acreage is in the clay-marl-gypsum Grand Cru Altenberg de Bergbieten, among Alsace’s northernmost important vineyards. I knew the site through lovely wines of the late Rolland Schmitt, and knew them in that context to be among the most



intensely floral, spicy and chalky of the world’s rieslings.

My first sip of Mochel Riesling was truly electrifying. But I confess to a thought that had never previously occurred to me: perhaps this is a wine possessed of *too much* sheer minerality for my customers! I had to buy it anyway, and now I find many of you share my admiration. The Riesling here is 100% from Altenberg, but only certain lots from the best spots and older vines will be bottled as Grand Cru.

Among the other manifest talents of Frédéric Mochel, his son Guillaume, and the terroir of Altenberg, are one of the most riveting of Muscats d’Alsace and a Gewurztraminer that’s as lithe and mineral-tinged as a riesling, yet fabulously fragrant as well.

The Mochel vineyards are planted largely to pre-clonal selections, a high percentage of these fifty and more years of age, and farmed organically and immaculately. For fermentation, ambient yeasts suffice and there is no concern about how long it takes them to get the job done while all the while imparting a maximum of aromatic nuance and textural allure.

It is a thrill to be able to offer you Mochel’s wines, confident of their superb utility at table and of this estate’s overall stature, which ranks with the region’s dozen best.

Alsace

Altenberg de Bergbieten

Varieties: *Sylvaner, Klevner-Pinot Blanc, Auxerrois, Riesling, Muscat, Gewurztraminer, Tokay-Pinot Gris*

Acreage: 22 acres

Average production: 6,000 cases

Vinification: *tank & large old ovals*

Riesling

Riesling Grand Cru Altenberg de Bergbieten “Cuvée Henriette”

Gewurztraminer

Muscat Grand Cru Altenberg de Bergbieten

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“Frédéric Mochel has always produced the finest Grand Cru Altenberg de Bergbieten, although his Gewurztraminer has the sort of tangy balance to its fruit that you might expect to find in a Riesling, while his Riesling has the sort of spice you normally associate with Gewurztraminer!”

Tom Stevenson, The Wines of Alsace